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AUTHOR	Akcan, Sumru
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ABSTRACT

This case study investigated factors that increased verbal interaction for students in group work in a ninth grade, content-based, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) class. Out of 11 tasks assigned to the students during the semester, four language-based and four genre-based tasks were analyzed. At the end of the study, the nature of verbal interaction in group work in both language-based and genre-based tasks was grouped into four common categories: role of the teacher, task type, cooperative learning skills, and role of the group facilitator. In this article, specific actions and behaviors that facilitate verbal interaction in group work are explored within each category. A model is also presented which demonstrates that these four categories are not separate from each other, but are closely linked so that the combination of the categories encourages group members to feel individually accountable for group work. Accountability leads to increased participation, thereby resulting in increased verbal interaction among group members. The tasks are appended. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/SM)

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Factors Facilitating Verbal Interaction in Group Work in a Ninth-Grade Content-Based ESL Class

Sumru Akcan

The University of Arizona

akcans@u.arizona.edu

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Phone: (520) 628-8552

Address: 951 E. 10th Street, #35

Tucson, AZ 85719 (until July 2002)

(After July 2002)

Address: Vapuryolu Yazarlar Sok. Has Apt.

No: 4/9, 81070

Suadiye, Istanbul, TURKEY

Phone: 011-90-216-3584744

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigated the factors that increased verbal interaction for students in group work in a ninth grade content-based ESL class. Out of eleven tasks assigned to the students during the semester, four language-based and four genre-based tasks were analyzed. At the end of this study, the nature of verbal interaction in group work in both language-based and genre-based tasks was grouped into four common categories. These categories include: (1) role of the teacher, (2) task type, (3) cooperative learning skills, and (4) role of the group facilitator. In this article, specific actions and behaviors that facilitate verbal interaction in group work are explored within each category. A model is also presented which demonstrates that these four categories are not separate from each other, but are closely linked so that the combination of those categories encourages group members to feel individually accountable for group work. Accountability leads to increased participation, thereby resulting in increased verbal interaction among group members.

Introduction

The opportunity to engage in meaningful language interaction in the classroom is essential to second language acquisition (Swain, 1985; Foster, 1999). Swain suggests that group work gives students the opportunity to create comprehensible output, since they interact and negotiate meaning with each other through their interactions. Nunan (1988) claims that "classroom communication can foster language acquisition, particularly if learners are given opportunities for productive language use and the negotiation of meaning in small-group work" (p. 83). Nunan, agreeing with Richards (1985) and Ehrman and Dornyei (1998), argues that collaborative communication activities, such as group work and role playing, require learners to practice the language collaboratively.

The most compelling theoretical rationale for cooperative learning comes from Vygotsky (Murray, 1994). Vygotsky (1962) proposes that children learn language through meaningful interactions with their environments and other people. These interactions are essential for the development of new knowledge since children learn when they are supported by others who know more than they do, such as teachers or peers. Cooperative learning maximizes students' learning while simultaneously fostering the learning of other group members. Students work until all group members have successfully understood and completed a task. Cooperative learning refers to carefully structured group work that allows all learners to interact, exchange information, and be held accountable for information being learned (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Johnson, 1995).

Johnson and Morrow (1981), Coffey (1999), and El-Koumy (1997) believe that there should be activities that promote interaction among students in a classroom setting, such as role playing and group/pair work for successful second language acquisition. Small-group work in the language classroom provides an optimal environment for negotiating comprehensible output (Long & Porter, 1985). Of primary importance in second language acquisition are ample opportunities for frequent and sustained interaction in the target language. Language learners need to interact with one another concerning

meaningful tasks. This need for interaction has been addressed by cooperative learning research, which creates frequent and extended interactions in the target language among learners, and which has emerged as a significant concept in the field of language learning (Coelho, 1992; Doryei & Malderez, 1997; Liang, Mohan, & Early, 1998).

Olsen and Kagan (1992) define cooperative learning as any "group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (p.8). If cooperative group work is structured and managed appropriately, student-student interaction in group work can improve a student's use of language and play an important role in the development of a student's oral proficiency. The question then is "what are the specific actions and behaviors that increase the verbal interaction during group work?" This study investigates the categories that affect verbal interaction among ninth-grade students during group work. Within each category, it also explores those teachers' and students' actions and behaviors that facilitate verbal interaction in both language-based and genre-based tasks within an ESL context. Language-based and genre-based tasks are defined in the "data analysis" part of this article.

Methodology

Participants. Participants in the study were 19 students all enrolled in the same ninth grade class in a midwestern city in the United States. These students came from Eritrea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Ukraine, Thailand, Haiti, Cambodia, Senegal, Colombia, Ethiopia and Cameroon. The teacher of the ninth grade class was a native speaker of English with many years of teaching experience. She had been using group work extensively in her teaching for the past 12 years. Her goal was to teach students how to use academic English effectively, and also to focus on students' English language skills.

Data Collection Methods and Plan. The data for this study came from field notes, audio and video recordings, structured and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and the students, and artifacts (i.e., students' work and activity worksheets). The role of the researcher in this class was that of an observer. She observed the group work in the ninth grade ESL class once a week for three months.

During each observation period, two groups out of five were audiotaped and observed by the researcher. Besides audiotaping, two groups were videotaped three times in different activities throughout the observation period since the researcher was allowed to videotape the group work three times. The purpose of the audiotaping and the videotaping was to analyze the verbal interaction of the students in order to learn about the frequency of interactions and the nature of behaviors that students engaged in while working in groups. The two groups that were audiotaped and videotaped were chosen at random. There were generally five groups working together and each of the group contained three to four members.

Before each class period, a structured interview was conducted with the teacher to obtain information about the task the students were going to work on as well as to learn the strategies that the teacher had planned to make group work useful. For instance, in a structured interview, the researcher asked the teacher questions, such as: what kinds of techniques is she using in teaching English,? how long has she been using cooperative learning,? how does she form groups,? does she assign roles to her students in group work,? did her class receive training on cooperation,? and what is her role in the group work? In addition, an unstructured interview was conducted with the teacher at the end of each group work session (after the class) regarding how well and efficiently the students were working together and what could be done to improve the students' performance during group work. An unstructured interview was also carried out with some of the students during their lunch time after the class in order to learn what they were thinking about their group work.

Artifacts, such as activity handouts and group processing evaluations in which the students individually wrote their reflections and experiences about group work, were collected and analyzed. During the group processing evaluations, the teacher asked the students to write down their opinions concerning the task they were working on as well as the group process they went through during the group work.

Data Analysis. Eight tasks were chosen for analysis out of a total of eleven tasks assigned to the students during the term of observation. These recorded tasks fell into two categories-- four were language-based tasks and four were genre-based tasks. Tasks that focused primarily on linguistic cues and knowledge of language itself were coded as being "language-based," while tasks that aimed at developing a student's academic knowledge of literature and language in a contextualized academic situation were coded as "genre-based." The language-based and genre-based tasks are presented in the Appendix.

The researcher audiotaped the total of 24 groups during the observation period. From a total of five groups operating per class session, two of the groups were audiotaped. For the data analysis, a five-minute transcription of 16 groups (Eight groups for language-based tasks and eight groups for genre-based tasks) was made. The five-minute verbal interaction samples were selected when the students were working together to accomplish their group task. These verbal interaction samples formed the basis of the study's unit of analysis. Then each five minute transcript associated with the task was coded under the headings "Focused Interactions" and "Modified Interactions." These two categories were adapted from the coding scheme developed by Sharan and Shachar (1988) and Doughty and Pica (1986).

In this study, the researcher employed "Focused Interactions" as a set of categories that serves to express requests, organizational comments relevant to the group work, or agreements/disagreements that interrupt interaction during group work. Sharan and Shachar (1988) indicate that these categories have a high level of face validity and appear to characterize more effective communication. "Modified Interactions" were also coded for

confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and clarification requests. The coding of the transcripts was checked by two native speakers of English. Inter-rater reliability for the classification of the students' statements was 93%.

Once the coding was completed, the frequency of the students' speech was calculated by counting the number of turns the students took during the course of five minute group work. It did not matter how long a student spoke; what was important was the fact that the student was speaking. When a student stopped speaking on his or her own or when a student was interrupted, that constituted the end of that student's turn. If a student continued to speak after an interruption, the continuation was counted as a new turn. This definition of a turn is widely used within research studies (Dorwal & Eckerman, 1984; Garvey & Berninger, 1981; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). In instances where the speech of two students occurred simultaneously, the speech of each student was scored separately. Based on this analysis, the percentage of total interactions was found for each minute and charted for the eight tasks. The percentage of verbal interaction found in both language-based and genre-based tasks is shown in Tables 1 and 2. The last step in the analysis was to discover those categories that affect verbal interaction in group work by analyzing each minute of the five minute sample based on the coding schemes used for this study.

To discover the specific actions and behaviors in each category, the researcher analyzed the rate of interaction for each minute of the five minute group work. Then she sought to discover the reasons why an increase or decrease of interaction occurred. If there was an increase in the interaction rate, the researcher probed for the reason as well as the reason behind a decrease in the verbal interaction level. Basically, coding helped the researcher see the interaction process and discourse used by the students and the teacher. The existence of the factors that facilitated verbal interaction were supported by the triangulation of the field notes and the interviews. For instance, in one of the interviews, the teacher explains her role in the classroom by stating, "I think my role is to design activities,

and then to facilitate the students' understanding....and help them to get to accomplish the goal." This statement was coded under the theme of "Role of the teacher: Teacher as a facilitator of group work." In the field notes, the researcher points out the role of a group facilitator in terms of encouraging the verbal interaction among the group members. For instance, a group facilitator clarifies the content of a task and helps group members proceed in language-based and genre-based tasks. A group facilitator is a student who generally has a high level of language proficiency. This observation was coded under the theme of "role and characteristic of a group facilitator."

At the end of the triangulation of the data, the researcher found four common categories, namely, role of the teacher, task type, cooperative learning skills, and role of the group facilitator within language-based and genre-based tasks that affected the verbal interaction of students during group work. The model in Figure 1 shows the relationship among the four categories.

Results

This study revealed four categories related to language use among group members who were working together to accomplish their tasks. These categories are: (1) role of the teacher, (2) task type, (3) cooperative learning skills, and (4) role of the group facilitator. In the next section, each of the categories is explained within the context of the ESL classroom in order to show how the specific actions and behaviors in each category can affect and increase the likelihood of interaction among students (Pseudonyms for the children and the teacher are used throughout the next section).

Role of the Teacher

The teacher facilitates verbal interaction in group work in both language-based and genre-based tasks by frequently monitoring the group, helping them clarify their goals, providing instruction whenever needed, asking questions to group members in order to

redirect group work, and reminding the students to cooperate. Most of the time, the teacher delegated authority to group members; however, when an intervention was needed, she intervened in the group work and motivated the group members to interact with one another, thereby making the group work function. For instance, in one of the language-based tasks, the students were asked to talk about words and their definitions and then work together to complete their own worksheets. The group members were Sevan, Vanessa, Sena, and Ngan. Sevan explained some words to the group members; but after a while, the group became silent. It became clear that they did not fully understand what they were doing. The group needed goal clarification from the teacher, so Sevan asked Mrs. Pitman (the teacher).

Sevan: Mrs. Pitman, what we do?

Mrs. Pitman: Everyone understands all these words? Remember you're a group, work together, talk to each other.

Sevan: Vanessa asked what "cur" is and I explained her.

Mrs. Pitman: O.K. You need to do all of them, you need to go through each one and talk about the meaning. Each word, for instance "hydroplane." What is a hydroplane?

Sevan: (Begins to read from the worksheet the meaning of "hydroplane"): A plane which can fly in the air, and go in the water.

Mrs. Pitman: (To the group members): Do you understand?

Vanessa, Sena, Ngan (In unison): Yes.

As in this example, the teacher modeled the activity by asking them the meaning of a "hydroplane." She also reminded the students about the importance of cooperation in completing the task. She encouraged the students to talk by telling them to cooperate with one another. After Mrs. Pitman's guidance to the group, the students went on to discuss each word. The role of the teacher is a key factor in making group work proceed. This role comes from the teacher's critical position in structuring the tasks and groups, monitoring group processes, as well as facilitating the group work in order to make it more successful.

The other categories, such as task type, the role of the facilitator, and social skills are explained below which are related to the "teacher" role.

Task Type

The nature of the task appeared to be a significant category related to verbal interaction in group work. An increase in the difficulty level of the task or the amount of work a task required, and a more limited period of time given to complete the task were found to be the causes of the decrease in verbal interaction in genre-based tasks. For instance, in "The Tom-Cat" poem, the students needed to read the poem and discuss two study questions, circling all the alliteration and consonants in the poem, as well as the poem's rhyme scheme. Their last task was to write down the similes, metaphors, implied metaphors, and personifications found within the poem.

Kien, Gherma and Hassan were working on the poem. Kien began to read the poem, but suddenly she stopped. She did not pronounce the word "allay" and she said she did not want to read anymore of the poem. Hassan said "somebody could read it." Then Gherma began to read the poem. The others followed along on their worksheets. After a while, the following exchange took place:

Kien: I don't understand it.

Gherma: It's hard.

Hassan: What it is talking about?

Gherma continued to read, but the group had clearly become lost. After Gherma read a few lines, she stopped and asked the group if they understood the poem. There was silence and no one answered. Kien broke through the silence and said:

Kien: I don't

Gherma: I don't understand.

The difficulty level of the poem impeded student interaction because the language of the poem was beyond their language proficiency. After the students read the poem two or

three times to further comprehend the poem's meaning, they moved to the questions listed on the group worksheet. The first problematic issue that decreased the verbal interaction of students engaged in genre-based tasks was the difficulty of the task. Students found the poetic tasks difficult to understand and perform, thereby resulting in less verbal interaction and less interest in working on the task.

The second problematic area for genre-based tasks was the amount of work and time devoted to the tasks. A large amount of work and a limited time to complete a task caused a division of labor in the groups, thereby decreasing verbal interaction. This forced group members to work on the task alone. Time is an important factor in a task because there should be an adequate time frame for the task completion. A large amount of work with little time to complete it caused task specialization among the students so that each student took a portion of work within a task and worked on it in order to complete the whole task.

The data show that task specialization appeared to be a factor that caused decreased verbal interaction and cooperation in genre-based tasks. This possibly negative result differs from Slavin's (1983) generally positive claims that task specialization creates high levels of individual accountability as each member shares in completing the task and is evaluated by his or her groupmates, so that learning can be enhanced through task specialization. The use of task specialization, where group members are responsible for portions of the group task may be an effective procedure for increasing student achievement; however, this study found task specialization to be an obstacle impeding language interaction among group members. Cohen (1994) supports this finding by stating that, if labor is divided and each person is given a portion of work, the result may be that each person quietly works on his or her own task with little interaction among group members.

Cooperative Learning Skills

The results of this study suggest that cooperative skills are a necessary element for group interaction and therefore teaching these skills becomes crucial for group interaction. This category is also closely related to the teacher's role, since teachers need to train their students to use these skills in order to work cooperatively and successfully getting along with others. Teaching students to use these skills through cooperative learning activities is necessary for effective group work. Two types of cooperative skills appeared in both language-based and genre-based tasks. Task-related social skills, such as requesting clarification, giving clarification, and confirmation checking, allowed students to complete their tasks. The second type of cooperative skills was group-related skills which were used to facilitate group interaction in order to accomplish the task. These types of skills included keeping the group on task and encouraging group members to participate.

The data illustrate that the development of cooperative learning skills leads to an increased understanding and production of language. An example that explains this situation comes from a genre-based task associated with the poem "The Tom-Cat." In this situation, Hassan asks about the meaning of the word "swing:"

Hassan: What means swings?

Gherma: What?

Hassan: What means swings? (He does not pronounce it correctly)

Swing likes...

Xuan: Swing (Corrects Hassan's pronunciation)

Hassan: (Spells) s-w-i-n-g

Kien: Swing is like...(Mimes how a bird flies)

Xuan: Go up and down.

Hassan: Like a bird?

Kien: Yes, like a bird.

Hassan had difficulty in understanding the word "swing" because he was not familiar with this word. Hassan requested clarification from the group members. Kien and Xuan gave clarifications by explaining the meaning of the word "swing" thereby helping Hassan understand the meaning of the word. The task-related skills, such as requesting clarification, giving clarification, and confirmation checking, increased language production and led to greater understanding and increased interaction among group members.

Another example comes from when Genna, Gual, and Manuela are working together.

Manuela: We go to Part B, O.K.?

Genna: Part B.

Manuela: O.K. What we have to do is like draw a catacomb, you know like a little town with the lot of catacomb in it.

Gual interrupts her for the clarification of the word "catacomb."

Manuela: Catacomb is the houses under the ground.

Genna: They look like houses.

Gual: Yeah, it's underground.

The second type of cooperative skills found in the data is group-related skills. An example comes from one of the language-based tasks in which the students describe a place, then draw a picture of that place. The following dialogue took place when the group described the place. Manuela, Gual and Genna are in the same group. Manuela and Genna begin to work on part A, but Gual loses his concentration for a moment and thinks about something else.

Genna (To Gual): You look like you're not in the same group.

Gual: No!

Genna asks Gual to contribute to the group work and after Genna's warning, Gual returns to the group work. Group-related skills, such as keeping the group on track and

asking them to contribute, help the group progress and involve the students in group work by increasing their verbal interaction. Overall, this study suggests that group-related and task-related skills help the students become involved in group work by promoting peer support and increasing language understanding and production.

Role of the Group Facilitator

The teacher's role is directly related to the facilitator's role because the teacher has direct control over each group. Based on the interview data, Mrs. Pitman believes that in every group there must be a person who can direct the group's processes. She knew which students worked well together and who in the group could lead. A facilitator's language proficiency level is more advanced than the other members of the group. The personality of the facilitator cannot be ignored within the group's dynamics. Furthermore, the facilitators in the groups should be students who can direct group work without imposing their own ideas or completely dominating the group work. Instead, facilitators share their ideas with others to encourage group members to participate.

The group facilitator also plays a significant role in increasing the level of language interaction among group members. In both language-based and genre-based tasks, this study found that facilitators (group leaders) helped group work proceed and encouraged group members to participate in group task. To promote language interaction, the facilitator directs members towards their task; she or he controls group processes through asking the other members' opinions and sharing his or her ideas with other group members.

The facilitator is also helpful in clarifying the content of the task and making group work run smoothly. By having the group members become more involved in their work, the facilitator ensures comprehension. Likewise, facilitators play an important role in making each group member individually accountable for a given task. She or he helps group members understand the content of a task, as well as the group's goal so that each member becomes involved in language production. In this aspect, a facilitator serves as a student's

instructional aid during group work by assisting and supporting the group in order to make them individually accountable for group work as a whole.

In one of the language-based tasks ("Pre-Writing Outline"), the students were asked to choose a topic and make an outline of that topic. Manuela, the facilitator, directed the members towards accomplishing the group work. She initiated the group work by reading aloud one of the topics that group might work on and told the group what they had to do in order to complete the task. Manuela facilitated language interaction within the group by giving directions to the group members. She was also helpful in explaining the group's goal and encouraging her friends to keep on task.

Based on the characteristics of the facilitators found in this study, a facilitator's cooperative skills should be highly developed. She or he will have a combination of either task-related or group-related skills to make group work successful. She or he facilitates group processes with the contribution of other group members so as to increase both the comprehension and production of each group member.

Discussion

Johnson and Johnson (1989) state that positive interdependence only occurs when students work together and talk about the work, sharing answers and materials, while also encouraging each other to learn. Positive interdependence appears in both language-based and genre-based tasks and influences verbal interaction among group members by letting them work together cooperatively on their task in order to accomplish the group's goal. The students also have a sense of responsibility when working together in order to complete their task. If the students realize that they cannot achieve the group's goal, they will not work together to complete their task.

However, positive interdependence does not occur alone. The teacher's role, task type, the type of cooperative learning skills, and the facilitator used within the group affect the occurrence of positive interdependence among group members. Cooperative learning

skills become an instrument for providing interaction and encouraging the students to support one another. In essence, cooperative skills promote peer assistance by increasing language interaction. Group facilitators also act as a model for group members by reminding the students of the group's goal and inviting them to work together on the task. They care for and support the other group members. The more group members care about and support each other, the more positive interdependence will occur among group members, thereby appearing to facilitate language interaction.

Finally, individual accountability is the outcome of the four categories mentioned within this study and it is particularly relevant to the existence of positive interdependence. This means that the more students work together, help each other with learning, and complete their tasks, the more they feel personally responsible for contributing to group work as a whole.

Implications for Teachers

Cooperative group work has the potential to improve students' verbal language use by creating an environment and a meaningful context within which students can interact and communicate. But this positive outcome is based on careful planning and management of the group's work. Teachers carry a great deal of responsibility in designing the tasks, managing the group work, and evaluating its success. As a result, the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers determines the rate of language interaction and the overall success of the group work.

Before teachers can implement cooperative learning into their classrooms, it will be useful for them to learn the way cooperative group work operates in the classroom and make the time commitment to incorporate cooperative learning into their lesson plans. Teachers also need to give themselves enough time to learn about their students and teach them the cooperative learning skills necessary for group work before using cooperative learning in their classrooms. Students can be trained to use their group-related and task-

related skills before being placed into groups and letting them work together. They can also be encouraged by the teacher to use these skills during group work. Teachers should know their students well and understand their personalities before implementing group work in their classes. Therefore, they might need to observe their students in and out of class in order to try to understand their personalities, as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers also need to be aware that the nature of the task should allow for interaction and cooperation among students while they work on a task. When teachers design tasks for cooperative group work, they can take into consideration task characteristics such as the appropriate level of a task to students' language level, the amount of work needed for a given task, and an adequate time frame for task completion. Tasks that promote interaction and cooperation should be preferred, rather than tasks which force students to work on their own within a limited period of time.

Conclusion

Cooperative learning has great potential for maximizing the students' use of a target language in second and foreign language classrooms. Cooperative learning methodology can provide opportunities for language use among group members through interaction, so long as key elements come together and are taken into consideration in incorporating this method into language instruction. If cooperative learning lessons are well-planned and carefully structured, this method offers opportunities for students to interact with one another and improve their language skills.

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Table 1:

Percentage of the Total Time of the Verbal Interaction in Language-Based Tasks During a Five Minute Time Period

	1st min.	2nd min.	3rd min.	4th min.	5th min.
Task 1 Outline	28%	12%	24%	7%	29%
Task 2 Vocabulary	36%	13%	18%	11%	22%
Task 5 Phrases	30%	14%	15%	18%	23%
Task 8 Description	35%	15%	3%	6%	41%

Percentage of total verbal interaction in language-based tasks: 70%

Table 2:

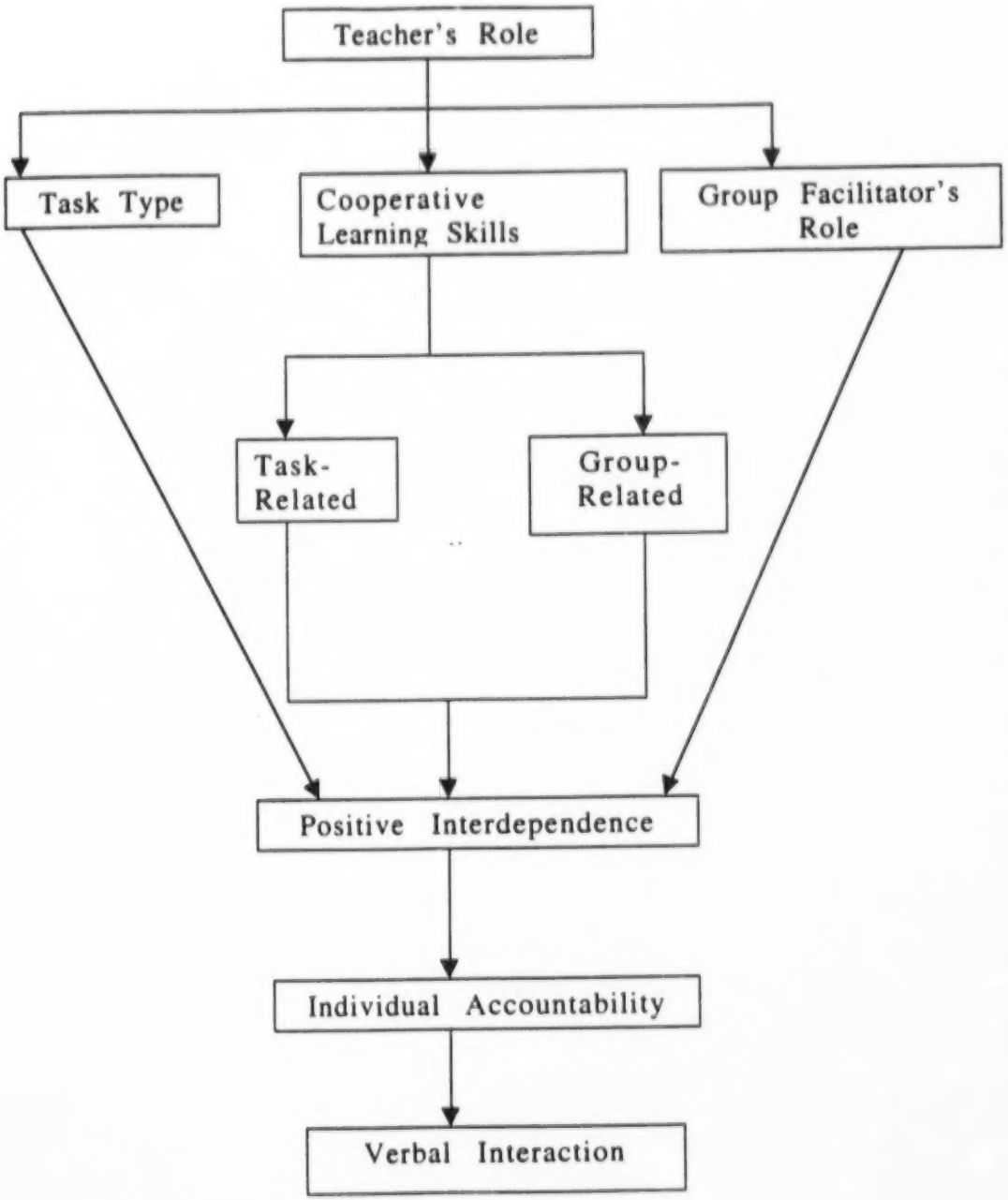
Percentage of the Total Time of the Verbal Interaction in Genre-Based Tasks During a Five Minute Time Period

	1st min.	2nd min.	3rd min.	4th min.	5th min.
Task 3 Role-Play	28%	22%	7%	17%	26%
Task 4 Poem	37%	23%	17%	17%	6%
Task 6 Poem	25%	17%	14%	8%	36%
Task 7 Poem	23%	17%	30%	9%	21%

Percentage of total verbal interaction in genre-based tasks: 53%

Figure 1:

The Interaction of the Four Categories to Produce Verbal Interaction in Group Work



Appendix

Language-Based Tasks

Task 1: Pre-Writing Outline

The students will choose a topic from a worksheet and develop a "pre-writing" outline based on that topic.

Task 2: Phrases from "Split Cherry Tree" by Jesse Stuart

The students prepare to read a story called "Split Cherry Tree" that contains a large amount of dialect. Their task will be to find three phrases assigned to each group on the page indicated, read the sentence containing the phrase, and discuss among themselves the possible meanings of that phrase. After they finish with their task, the group will choose a teacher who will go to the other groups and teach them the three phrases that have been learned. After all the teachers are finished presenting, they will go back to their home group where Mrs. Pitman gives them a second sheet in order to write down these snippets of dialect they have learned from the activity. Mrs. Pitman will collect one worksheet from each group.

Task 3: Vocabulary from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber

The students get ready to read a short story called "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." The students will teach each other the words contained on the worksheets within their own groups. After they have taught each other the words, they will complete the worksheet by working cooperatively. The teacher will collect one worksheet from each group at the end of the class.

Task 4: Vocabulary from "The Cask of Amantilado" by Edgar Allan Poe

The students have just begun to work on the short story called "The Cask of Amantilado" by Edgar Allan Poe. Mrs. Pitman introduces the vocabulary from the story the day before. Each group will then have to use their vocabulary words to describe a place, what might happen in that place, the feelings that they might have in that place, and finally, draw to a picture of their place and present it to the entire class. Each group has four words

that they must use. These words have been studied previously. They can use as many vocabulary words as they can, but they must use the assigned four.

Genre-Based Tasks

Task 1: The poems -"Fog" by Carl Sandburg, "The City" by Lanston Hughes, and "Lodged" by Robert Frost

The students read these three short poems and discuss within their groups the personification image of the poems and come up with the answers to a set of questions. After they answered the questions in their groups, they will then choose one of the poems and build the time-line showing what happened in the poem. The students will also write out the rhyme scheme of the poem, draw pictures of the personification presented within the poem, and write out their own four line poem in imitation of the poem they focused upon. Each student has a worksheet, but the teacher will expect only one work product. As a result, she will just take one worksheet from each group.

Task 2: Poem -"The Tom-Cat" by Don Marquis

The class has been working on poetic elements. They are going to discuss the poem "The Tom-Cat" by themselves and then answer two questions. All of the students will have a copy of a poem and will circle all the use of alliteration that they can find. Then on another copy, the students will circle all the consonants and write both the end and internal rhymes on a separate sheet of paper. Moreover, the students will also be required to write out the similes and metaphors found within the poem, as well as any implied metaphors. Finally, the students will be required to write a personification. The teacher will collect only one set of papers from each group on a random basis.

Task 3: Poem-"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

The group will create a poem explaining one of the methods of characterization (i.e., using the physical description of the character, the character's actions, comments and reactions of other characters to the character in question, etc.) and the way characterization is

used in the story, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." After creating the poem, the students will present their poem to the entire class.

Task 4: Role-Play "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

The group will take two scenes from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and write a short play. The group will decide how they will act out these scenes as well as demonstrating two methods James Thurber uses to reveal Mitty's character. During the next class period, the students will act out their play for the rest of the class.

Note

If you would like more information about the activities in language-based and genre-based tasks, please contact the researcher at the address below:

Vapuryolu Yazarlar Sok.
Has Apt., No 4/9
81070, Suadiye, Istanbul
TURKEY

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Sharon Deckert for providing me valuable feedback and suggestions on this paper.

The Author

Sumru Akcan is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching(SLAT) program at the University of Arizona. She did her master's in Literacy: English as a Second Language program at the University of Cincinnati. Her research interests include classroom interaction in second language acquisition, cooperative language learning, materials design/development, and immersion education.

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Organization/Address: 951 E. 10th St., #35, Tucson, AZ 85719	Telephone: (520) 628-3552	FAX:
	E-Mail Address: akcans@u.arizona.edu	Date: 03/21/02

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